WORDS OF RECONCILIATION.

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OUR DOCTRINE NEITHER UNIVERSALISM NOR ANNIHILATIONISM.

We have carefully pointed out wherein the doctrine of Redemption through resurrection differs from that of endless torment. But it is not therefore the doctrine of either the universalist or the destructionist. It is broad enough to include whatever is true in either of these three theories of human destiny. But it rejects the false and is distinct from either.

1. If any believe that the Scripture teaching concerning the sinner's doom is that he must suffer everlastingly, this doctrine does not exclude that view. For resurrection, although redemptive, does not give the unjust a standing in the eternal life. Far from it. Nor does it set aside the inexorable law that "whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." Yea, rather, it establishes the law. The resurrection body must gather up and perpetuate the results of previous character. The law, "To every seed his own body" is but another statement of the harvest law just quoted. Any one who reflects upon the connection between embodiment and character, and its determination of the creature toward happiness or degradation and misery, will perceive what immense possibilities of reward or punishment lie in this prime law of life. The world is full now of men who bear about in their bodies the punishment of sin.

Some of them are daily beaten with many stripes. Resurrection, in itself, does not set aside that law. Otherwise there would be no "resurrection unto condemnation." It does not lift the sinner into the ranks of the saved and the glorified. Nothing unclean can enter there.

This doctrine, therefore, while it repudiates the dogma of endless torment in hell, as a misconception of our Lord's teaching, makes room for a continued and ever enduring punishment. Or,

2. If any believe that certain Scriptures, which speak of the subjection of all things and all creatures to the reign of Christ look forward to an ultimate restitution, our doctrine does not exclude that view. The place of subjection and privation, and even of banishment and suffering, may be still one of reconciliation. We understand the universalist doctrine to be that all mankind shall, in the end, be made partakers in the pure and immortal life of Christ; that His redemption of the whole looks forward to that end and provides for it. Our doctrine affirms only that His ransom redeems all men from death to life; not necessarily to life emancipated from bondage to sin and death and out from under the yoke of subjection in this created system. Only those are thus set free who are united to the Christ by faith, and who die with Him out of the old life of sin and out of the world bound over to judgment, and who are thus fitted to rise and reign with Him. And yet even the unjust must be brought back to life under more favorable conditions. For it is a gift conferred under the administration of Christ and His saints, who are the kings and priests in His kingdom. It cannot bring with

it, however, simply a renewal of the old trial under which they failed and lost their crown and heritage. The world to come is not to be a mere repetition of this. New conditions bring a new form of trial, with its own rewards and penalties. That some fail under it is evident in that some go down into the second death.

3. And here we have a word to say to the advocates of conditional immortality. Their doctrine affirms that death destroys man. We affirm that it destroys him *qua homo*, as man, but does not make an end of him. He is destroyed as to his *form* of being, but not out of all being. Otherwise he could not be resurrected. Our doctrine does not require any one to hold as a tenet, either in philosophy or theology, that man is inherently immortal. It simply affirms that, through redemption by Christ, all men shall be brought back to life, but not all to eternal life, which is life of a higher order.

Thus we avoid the objections which lie against that view in that it makes resurrection to be re-creation, and represents God as bringing back vast multitudes of men to life simply for the purpose of tormenting them for a season and then killing them again. In our view of the redemptive character of resurrection, we have the best of reasons for such a revival.

If, however, in the new conditions of their renewed life, they remain incorrigible and disobedient, then the second death into which they are cast may be their final end. For no second resurrection is promised. We do not see our way clear to dogmatically affirm that this class are then finally destroyed. The silence of Scripure is not positive teaching. But, if any believe that

many passages of Scripture admit of no other explanation than that the wicked shall be *destroyed*, the "second death" furnishes them a point at which they can fit in their view to the comprehensive frame-work of the doctrine that resurrection redeems.

This doctrine is therefore a real "word of reconciliation," uniting the main lines of religious thinking on this subject at one central point. Starting from it, we can trust the Spirit to guide us into the further knowledge of things to come and to bring us into the unity of the faith.

And here we desire to state plainly that, while we are strenuous advocates of the truth of this primary principle, we would by no means be so strenuous as to these matters of inference and detail. We may make mistakes about these. We are not mistaken in the principle itself. We are anxious *first* that our brethren should recognize the redemptive character of resurrection as a vital feature in God's great plan, without which we shall fail to understand it, and fail to properly make known His truth and grace to men. This is no minor point. It enters directly into that knowledge of God which lies at the foundation of the spiritual life and which determines its character.

Brethren criticise us for raising such questions before the public and bewildering good people. The public are already bewildered, and, worse still, blinded. It is because people have such monstrous notions of God, which are spiritual death to them, that we would tell them the truth about Him. It is just because our "good people" know so little of Him that their spiritual life is so often

defective and feeble. Our great business, we are told, is to bring men to Christ. But to what Christ? Shall it be to a Christ marred by our poor conceptions, so that there is no clear light of the knowledge of God shining in His face, or shall it be to the true Christ, the revealer of the Father? We are told that we should rather be teaching men to fear and love God. But what God? One of our distorted conception, or the true and "living God, who is the Saviour of all men, especially of them that believe." (I Tim. iv. 10).

These inquiries, therefore, pertain to the very foundations of Christian character. They affect the inmost life of the church and of our own souls. Surely these are not so bright and strong in our day as to make impertinent the inquiry whether some defect in our knowledge of God does not lie at the foundation of the defects in modern piety and church life which we all deplore. We are quite sure that if our modern Christianity had been a truer exponent of the character and ways of God, who has sent His Son to be the Saviour of the world, so many who have been brought up under its influence would not now be crowding to listen to the blasphemous raillery of such a man as Ingersoll. And we are also convinced that, if the bearings of this doctrine upon the place which man holds in this scheme of Nature and in the unfolding progress of life on this planet were understood, there would have been far less room for those materialistic theories which are now crowding out from the minds of men the knowledge of the true and living God, and which are preparing the world for the dark night of its final tribulation.

STUDIES IN THE BIBLE.

THE SONG OF MOSES.

(DEUT. xxxii.)

If any passage of Scripture deserves to be regarded as a key to the whole, it is this passage. It was spoken at a most important period in Israel's history. Their wanderings and long chastisement in the desert were now over and they stood upon the borders of the promised land. Moses had reviewed for them this history and enforced its solemn lessons. He had recited again the law, with its blessings and curses, and entreated them by these weighty sanctions to obey it. And yet he foresaw that they would disobey and that this long catalogue of evils would be visited upon them.

About to be removed from them by death, the Lord commands him to speak this song in their ears and to write it out as a testimony against them.

The passage is a vindication and a prophecy. It surveys the past and gazes far down into the future. It hints at God's deep designs in allowing these failures of His people and in their subsequent chastisements. It foreshadows the calling of the Gentiles. It speaks of a series of revenges upon the enemies who had wrought the ruin of His people and provoked His anger, and ends by summoning the nations to rejoice with His people in the mercy with which this long history of sin and of suffering should close.

Let us now examine minutely what this song teaches concerning the wages of sin; concerning judgment and retribution, and concerning redemption and resurrection,

and the final outcome of this deep problem of the world and of man.

1. The importance of the matters which make up the substance of this song is such that Heaven and Earth are invited to hear it.

"Give ear, O ye Heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O Earth, the words of my mouth. My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distill as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb and as the showers upon the grass." (vs. 1-2.)

Even the song of judgment is for the refreshment and growth of those who hear it.

2. The subject of the song is declared.

"Because I will publish the name of the LORD: ascribe ye greatness unto our God. He is the Rock, His work is perfect: for all His ways are judgment; a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He." (vs. 3-4.)

The strain of these verses is the one which is taken up in "the Song of Moses the servant of God, and the Song of the Lamb." (Rev. xv. 3, 4). The subject of this Song is the same as of that, only the redemption phase comes out more brightly in that song of victory. The Song in the Revelation contains but two verses, and these are drawn from the beginning and the ending of this Song of Moses. There can be no doubt, therefore, that the Song of Moses referred to in the Revelation is not the one He sang after the passage of the Red Sea, (Ex. xv.), but this Song of Judgment, which was spoken under such impressive circumstances just before his death.

3. It asserts the wickedness and ingratitude of the chosen people and recounts their mercies and apostasies.

"They have corrupted themselves, their spot is not the spot of His children: they are a perverse and crooked generation. Do

ye thus requite the LORD, O foolish people and unwise? Is not He thy Father that hath bought thee? hath He not made thee and established thee?

"Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask thy father and he will shew thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee. When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel. For the LORD'S portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of His inheritance. He found him in a desert land, in a waste howling wilderness; He led him about; He instructed him, He kept him as the apple of His eye. As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings; so the LORD alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him. He made him ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the increase of the fields; and He made him to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock; butter of kine and milk of sheep, with fat of lambs, and rams of the breed of Bashan, and goats, with the fat of kidneys of wheat; and thou didst drink the pure blood of the grape.

"But Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked; thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness; then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation. They provoked Him to jealousy with strange gods, with abominations provoked they Him to anger. They sacrificed unto devils, not to God; to gods whom they knew not, to new gods that came newly up, whom your fathers feared not. Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee." (Vs. 5-18.)

Observe here that, behind the forms and forces of nature worshipped as gods, there were demoniac powers, the real recipients of this homage. "They sacrificed unto devils."

4. It declares the Lord's abhorrence of their sins, their consequent rejection, and the calling out from the Gentiles of a new people.

"And when the Lord saw it, He abhorred them, because of the provoking of his sons and of his daughters. And He said, I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end shall be: for they are a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith. They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities: and I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation." (Vs. 19-21.)

Their rejection, however, would not be final. So St. Paul affirms in the eleventh chapter of Romans, after his quotation of the last verse of the above passage at the close of the tenth.

5. It affirms that the Lord's anger, which must burn against them on account of their sins, must burn also to the final destruction of this world system under which this depravity in His people had been developed.

"For a fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest hell, and shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains." Verse 22.

Here occurs the first mention in Scripture of the fire of Hell. It is represented as burning down to the regions of the dead, and to the very foundations of this natural order, as if it were the source of that corruption which had come upon His people.

Here we meet with a principle of the divine judgments whose importance cannot be overestimated; that which views the present cosmos or natural system as sharing in the responsibility for man's evil nature. As subject to vanity and in bondage to corruption, it has put its yoke on its highest creature, and it is therefore bound over to the consuming fire of God's judgments. It may seem to us irrational that accountability should attach in any way

to a material system. But if the whole system is pervaded by living forces; if it is the visible representative of "things invisible," which according to Colossians 1 : 14 are living powers, it wlll not appear so strange that the searching fire of God's anger should find evil intrenched at its very foundations, and that this present order and the powers that rule in it, with the devil, who is declared to be its prince (St. John xii: 31), should be involved in a common judgment.* We shall see hereafter how fully this principle is recognized in Scripture as palliating the moral turpitude of men and as furnishing a plea for divine interference in their behalf.

6. The temporal calamities which should soon overtake His people would be in the line of this consuming fire; manifestations of the same destructive energy against sin which must finally "consume the earth."

The term "fire" stands for the concentrated energy of the dissolving forces of nature. It is the rapid consumer of created forms. But this devouring energy operates in slower ways. It is more or less resisted and for a while baffled. And yet Scripture groups all the forms in which human lives are blighted and destroyed under this one head and refers them to one agency.† "Our God is a consuming fire." And so we read

"I will heap mischiefs upon them; I will spend mine arrows upon them. They shall be burnt with hunger and devoured with burning heat, and with bitter destruction. I will also send the teeth of beasts upon them, with the poison of serpents of the dust.

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* See upon this subject "Mystery of Creation and of Man," chapters VI and VII.

† "See Mystery of Creation" etc. page 169.

The sword without and terror within shall destroy both the young man and the virgin, the suckling, with the man of gray hairs." vs. 23-25.

7. These judgments would make an utter end of His people, were it not that the enemy's triumph over them would thereby be complete, and his impudent boast against the God of Israel be justified.

"I said I would scatter them into corners. I would make the remembrance of them to cease from among men; were it not that I feared the enemy, lest their adversaries should behave themselves strangely, and lest they should say, Our hand is high and the Lord hath not done all this." (Vs. 25-27.)

These words have primary reference to the taunts of their human adversaries. But they look beyond these. This song deals with secret things yet sealed up among God's treasures. The doctrine of diabolic agency, lying back of human instruments, and as concerned in this warfare against God's people, and of Satan as their chief enemy, had not yet been plainly revealed. But this song is of wide scope. It views as from a height this age-long and world-wide conflict. We have seen that it looks forward to a judgment upon this "present evil world," the fashion of which must pass away. And now it brings to view an "enemy" and certain adversaries who have well nigh brought God's people to ruin, and who would have made an utter end of them, but whom Jehovah, for the love He bears them and for the honor of His name, shall baffle and defeat.

8. If His people were but wise enough to understand this and to act in the faith and hope of this coming deliverance, they would now be able to put all these enemies to flight.

"For they are a nation void of counsel, neither is there any understanding in them.

"Oh, that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!" (Would that their faith could apprehend the deliverance that must finally be theirs!) "How should one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, except their Rock had sold them, and the Lord had shut them up.' (Vs. 28-30.)

The closing words of verse 30, give, in parenthesis, the reason why they prevailed so little against their enemies He, who was their Refuge, had given them up to judicial blindness and bondage on account of their sins.

And yet the Rock of their enemies was not as their Rock, as they themselves must confess. (Verse 31.)

9. Trust in false gods is but a delusive and poisonous exhilaration, a draught of deadly venom. And yet of such wine would Israel drink.

"For their vine is of the vine of Sodom, and of the fields of Gomorrah, their grapes are grapes of gall, their clusters are bitter: Their wine is the poison of dragons, and the cruel venom of asps." (Vs. 32-33.)

10. The mystery of God's people as thus enthralled is next referred to. And the "times" during which this "mystery of iniquity" should work, with the final issues of it are declared to be in His own power.

"Is not this laid up in store with me, and sealed up among my treasures?" (Verse 34.)

11. Jehovah now asserts himself as a God of vengeance and recompense. He had already declared the woes that He would send upon His people. But now His thought turns to the enemies, who had been the instruments of His punishment. They had seduced and

enslaved His people. And for this and for all their sins His wrath must come upon them.

"To me belongeth vengeance and recompense; their foot shall slide in due time: for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste." (Verse 35.)

12. He will judge His people, and turn toward them, after they have been brought low, and have become convinced that their false gods can bring them no help.

"For the Lord shall judge His people, and repent himself for His servants, when He seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up or left. And He shall say, Where are their gods, their rock in whom they trusted, which did eat the fat of their sacrifices, and drank the wine of their drink offerings? let them rise up and help you, and be your protection." (Vs. 36-38.)

His judgment of His people, however severe, would be for their salvation.

He would bring them into such humiliation that they will accept of the punishment of their iniquity, (see Lev. xxvi. 41-43,) and confess the impotence of the false gods in which they had trusted.

When men are brought low with no power to help themselves, and with every refuge failing them, then at such a time the grace of God comes to the rescue.

13. And so the Lord proclaims himself as their only Saviour, in that He alone is Lord of Life and of Death. His judgments must fall upon His people unto death. They must be handed over to the great Destroyer. And one generation after another must go down as captives into his gloomy realms. In this, the triumph of their enemy over them seemed complete and irreversible. But nothing is too hard for a God who can heal as well as

wound, who can make alive as well as kill, and out of whose hands none can fall.

"See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no strange god with me: I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand." (Vs. 39.)

Here we have an early intimation of that grand truth which runs through the Bible and underlies its whole redemptive system. Our redeeming God can make alive from death. He is the God of resurrection. So that not even death, which holds of right his people captive, can annul or defeat his gracious designs toward them. He can redeem them from the power of even the last enemy.

14. Hence, this song passes on to declare his sworn purpose to defeat and destroy all their enemies. He now makes His people's cause His own. And so we have, in grand outline, a series of revenges upon all their enemies, human and diabolic; a triumph which looks forward to their deliverance from death and from their chief enemy, which can be no other than "him that hath the power of death, that is, the devil."

"For I lift up my hand to heaven and say, I live forever." Vs. 40.

He swears by Himself, the Living One. This name, itself, is the defeat of death.

"If I whet my glittering sword and mine hand take hold of judgment; I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me." Vs. 41.

Israel's enemies are now Jehovah's enemies.

"I will make mine arrows drunk with blood, and my sword shall devour flesh, and that with the blood of the slain and of the

captives, from the beginning of revenges upon the enemy." (Vs. 42).

These words evidently cover a wide sweep of judgments. They predict the slaughter of their human enemies, the overthrow of them that had held them in captivity, and of the "*head or chief of the princes of the enemy.*"

The English version translates the last clause of this verse, "from the beginning of revenges upon the enemy." The Septuagint give the sense as above. And this is the meaning assigned to the word *peraoth* by Gesenius. See also Robert Young's version and his Concordance under the word "revenges." The reference is to the chief enemy, before spoken of in vs. 27. The song looks forward, therefore, to a culminating triumph over the great Adversary of God and man, the Prince of this world and head over all its evil powers. All Scripture teaches that he must be held to a final responsibility for the evil and misery which have come upon the people of God and upon the human race. And hence this song, among its sealed-up treasures, (vs. 34), declares God's purpose to finally bind and destroy this great enemy. We should not have known that this purpose is here concealed, had not all subsequent Scripture taught us that the work of redemption must reach on to this consummation. But now we go back to this key-passage of the Old Testament and find it there.

15. And so the song closes by calling upon the nations to join with Israel in their joy over this coming deliverance.

"Rejoice, O ye nations, with His people: for He will avenge the

blood of His servants, and will render vengeance to His adversaries, and will be merciful unto His land and to His people."*

That a triumph over other than mere human enemies of Israel is referred to is manifest from the fact that the nations are summoned to rejoice with them. They are also sharers in its joy and blessing. And hence this passage is quoted by St. Paul, (Romans xv : 10,) as proving that, in the mission of Jesus Christ to the world to confirm the promises made to the fathers, the Gentiles also should glorify God for his mercy. All God's adversaries shall finally be trampled out under the conquering feet of His Son, who, in His resurrection, led captivity captive. He has defeated and shall finally destroy death and him that hath the power of death, that is, the devil. (Heb. ii : 14.) He shall destroy all the works of the devil, and all God's enemies shall perish.

Such is the close of this song of judgment. It breaks out at the end into a song of redemption. And hence it furnishes the deeper tones in that splendid song of triumph which the victors sing, standing on the sea of glass, (Rev. xv : 3, 4.) "The Song of Moses, the servant of God, and of the Lamb," saying; *Great and marvellous are thy*

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*It is interesting to observe how the Septuagint translators have amplified the doxology in the closing verse of this song, showing their sense of the importance of this passage, as looking beyond all temporary deliverances to a final redemption from all the power of the enemy. They call upon the Heavens and all the angels of God and all the sons of God to join with Israel and the nations in joy and praise. "Rejoice, ye heavens, with Him, and worship before Him, all ye angels of God. Rejoice, ye nations, with His people, and let all the sons of God strengthen themselves in Him; because He revengeth the blood of His sons. And He shall judge and requite justice to his enemies and recompense them that hate Him. And the Lord will thoroughly cleanse His land and people."

works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of nations. Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for Thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before Thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.

The two focal points then around which the far reaching lines of this prophetic song curve are these, *Judgment* and *Redemption.* These are the two great principles of the divine dealing which appear in the history of Israel and of mankind. The two are not antagonistic but supplementary. "All His ways are judgment," (vs. 4,) but they issue in redemption. And "*His ways He made known unto Moses;*" how He chides His people for their sins, but keeps not His anger forever. (Psalm 103 : 7-9.)

As to these principles, we have seen

I. The wide scope of His judgments.

a. His people must receive at his hand double for all their sins. (vs. 21-26.)

b. The nations who oppress them must, in their turn' suffer under the heavy hand of His judgments. (vs. 35.)

c. The invisible spiritual enemies, of whom men are often the puppets, and who use them to carry on their warfare against God's people, must fall under His wrath. The fire of His anger shall burn against even the present system of Nature in which these foes are intrenched, the Earth and the foundations thereof. (Verse 22.)

d. He shall bruise the head and finally destroy the great adversary of God and man, and death, the last enemy. (Vs. 42-43.)

II. But these judgments are in order to redemption. They issue in the redemption of His people, of mankind

and of the Earth. The oppressors' yoke is broken by them. And death's captives are liberated through a triumph over death. The God who lives forever, who kills, can also make alive. (verse 39.) Not even death can remove any of His creatures out of His hand. This indeed is the vital, the essential fact in His redeeming work. Death is the worst and apparently the most invincible of all our enemies. All other agencies of divine wrath, war, famine, wasting sickness, are but handmaids to this supreme foe. No redemption can avail for man which does not redeem from death. No deliverance from captivity amounts to anything which does not reach the captives in the realms of death. Hence it is the deepest truth of redemption that our Redeemer is the God of resurrection. This truth is but dimly traced through the Old Testament, as compared with its bold outlines in the New. But it is there. And here, in this grand key-passage to all subsequent psalm and prophecy and history, we find it.

Proof that the Jews had some understanding of the great truth of redemption as dependent upon resurrection, and of this truth as taught in this passage, (verse 39) is found in the paraphrase of it given in the Jerusalem Targum:

"See now that I in my Word am He, and there is no other God beside me. I kill the living in this world and make alive the dead in the world that cometh; I am He who smiteth and I am He who healeth, and there is none who can deliver from my hand."

So also in the Jewish liturgies, (Horne's Introduction Vol. 2. p. 107.) we find the prayer:

"*Thou, O Lord, of thy abundant mercy makest the dead to live. Thou raiseth up those who fall; thou healest the*

sick, thou loosest them who are bound, and makest good thy word of truth to those who sleep in the dust. Who is to be compared to thee, O thou Lord of might! And who is like unto thee, O our King, who killest and makest alive, and makest salvation to spring as the grass in the field! Thou art faithful to make the dead to rise again to life. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who raisest the dead again to life!"

MISCELLANEOUS TOPICS.

ETERNAL FIRE.

The mistake into which the Christian world has fallen in regard to our Lord's teaching concerning the penalty of sin would have been avoided, if there had been a truer conception of the meaning of this essential phrase, the "eternal," or "unquenchable fire."

In mediæval times it was conceived of as a horrible gulf of material fire. In modern times the conception has been thinned out into a mere torment of the mind. And yet it is impossible to empty, in this way, some of the passages which refer to it of their obvious meaning. For instance, 2 Peter iii. 10–13, represents it as just as truly an agent of destruction and of the perdition of ungodly men, as was the water in the days of Noah.

Scripture itself gives the key to its meaning. And in this key we have a glimpse of the divine wisdom of the Word. The teaching of scripture in this matter is also the teaching of modern science.

The term "Eternal Fire" stands in Scripture as the representative of all those destructive forces in nature of

which fire is the chief, by which defective and effete forms of life are consumed, and before which men and nations are destroyed and sent down in captivity into the realms of death. In the Old Testament all wasting judgments are grouped under this term, "unquenchable fire." (Deut. ix. 3; xxxii. 22–24. Jer. xvii. 4. Ezek. xx. 47, etc.) And this is also the New Testament idea. If the passage Jude 7, had been taken as a key to the meaning of the phrase, it would have saved a world of mistake. It is there said that those cities, in their destruction, "suffered the vengeance of eternal fire." And that act of judgment is "set forth for an example." How were they destroyed? By an irruption of the destructive forces of nature, which are the angels of God's judgments, of which, in that case, fire was the chief.

The eternal fire then is that devouring energy, with which this existing system of nature is stored, and which manifests itself in all the ways by which human lives are blighted and destroyed.

Its work is essentially the work of death. War, disease, famine, are slower forms of its operation. But now and then, these forces break through all restraint. An ocean ship is tossed as a bubble in the hands of these fierce and howling forces and sucked down, with its freight of human lives, into the vortex of death. Or a burning hotel, crowded with despairing victims, a madhouse, a dwelling, or a great city, like Chicago, is enwrapped in their fiery shroud. These are all irruptions of that devouring energy of nature which lies massed behind all existing created forms, which is ever consuming them by the slow gnawing of its tooth of fire, or bursting

down upon them with a swifter and more vehement destruction.

John the Baptist described the whole work of the coming Messiah as a burning up the chaff of the world with unquenchable fire. The old creation, the old man in us, must perish before the advance of His work of new creation. Even the existing cosmos must some day be dissolved before it. For this fire is "prepared for the devil and his angels." All the malignant powers that have gained lodgment in the existing order of creation must be destroyed out of it through the agency of this everlasting fire.

We thus see that the judgment of the future is also the judgment of the present. The Messiah, even in his day, came to send fire on the earth. It was already kindled. (St. Luke xii. 49.) And now, at the right hand of power, He is judging the nations in righteousness. Men are all the time being handed over to the everlasting fire. He represented to His disciples, in all the prophecies of His coming judgment, that it was near, even at the doors. (Matt. xxiv. 29-34).

We are far from asserting that His day of judgment has not its consummating crisis in the future. His power and glory as a King and Judge, now concealed behind these shadows, are to be *revealed.* The forces of nature which we assume to be but blind agents, are to become the *manifest* agents of His power. They are the executive forces of His throne, the "angels of His might" who are to attend His coming "in flaming fire." (2 Thess. i. 7-8.) But we lose immensely in the moral power of the great truth of His judgment, by supposing that it is all

postponed to the future. Men above all things, need to be enlightened to perceive how He is now judging them and the world in righteousness.

And not less do Christians need to be told that, as men in the flesh, and so far as they walk after the flesh, they are the subjects of this judgment. The flesh in us must be destroyed, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. There is immense danger to the church in the belief that, in this respect, God is a respecter of persons; and that, if we sow to the flesh, we shall escape the harvest of corruption.

"Be not deceived, God is not mocked." This word, (Gal. vi. 7-8,) is addressed to Christians. And the whole book of Hebrews is written to teach us that, not God out of Christ, as we often hear, but God *in* Christ, *our* God is a consuming fire. (Heb. xii. 29.)

RITUALISTIC WORSHIP.

We have, on various occasions, attended services in churches in which the ritualistic element predominated in the worship. The most pronounced Protestant service of this character we ever witnessed was that held in the church built for Edward Irving in Gordon Square, London. The theory of worship in that church, known as "Catholic Apostolic," is that the highest form of Christian worship finds its model in the inspired forms of the Jewish tabernacle.

The church possesses in the one perfect sacrifice, in the sacramental bread, in the incense of the prayers of

saints, in the holy offices and ministries instituted by Christ, the substance, of which the Jewish forms were the shadow. Worship, therefore, in that Church, seeks to intrepret and to lift up those forms ordained by God, on to the spiritual plane of the new dispensation.

Without attempting either to defend or to assail this theory, we pass to observe that, in all ages of the Church there has been this tendency to enlarge and ennoble the ideas that enter into worship. The highest forms of expression in art, in color, in speech and in song have been employed to provide a suitable vehicle for devotion. Even the severest forms of Protestantism find that they cannot dispense with such aids. We have been frequently present in churches where a strong testimony against "forms" is maintained, in which forms find their way back in spite of the protest. The Scotch Covenanter has a sort of liturgy in Rouse's version, and his form of observing the Lord's supper is as dear to him as his right arm.

The descendants of the Puritans build beautiful churches and introduce responsive services. From many a Presbyterian loft we may now hear, almost any Sunday, the grand old *Te Deum* or the *Gloria in Excelsis.* It is quite common in Sunday-schools of all denominations to open and close with set forms of worship, and we have known their anniversaries to be opened with processional hymns and banners. We speak thus in order to show that there is an universal tendency toward such "forms" in worship. Nor can it always be explained as a mere fondness for scenic display. That false elements

often enter into such worship we are well aware. But after all there must be some true spiritual craving which these forms are intended to satisfy.

What is that craving? We believe it to be essentially the desire on the part of man to unite his worship here in the sphere of things seen with that which is ever ascending to God in the realm of things unseen. Any one who has read our views concerning angelic agency in the volume entitled "Mystery of Creation and of Man" will discover what we mean. We believe that all the outward forms and forces of the natural world are pervaded by spiritual agencies. Its forms, its colors, its sounds are not the expression of dead material things, but of spiritual realities. And behind them all are living powers. The use of these on our part, therefore, is an attempt to bring these agencies into harmony with our sentiments of devotion, and to compel them to aid us in their expression. In the worship of heaven the angels around the throne join in the song of the crowned elders, who are before it. And every creature in heaven earth and sea takes up the strain of harmony. There all created forms shall speak to us of God and reveal His beauty and glory. Now the curse still rests upon the creature, and it often gives false expression to the things of God. And our thoughts and affections often terminate upon it instead of rising through it to Him.

But still this is the essential idea of all such worship, where it is not hypocrisy or pretence. It is the effort on the part of weak man to compel the powers veiled behind these creature forms to join in his worship, and to lift him on their wings up to God, that so with angels

and archangels and all the company of heaven he may laud and bless and magnify His glorious name.

We say this is the hidden mystery in such worship, the essential theory of it, and the explanation of the fact that many noble souls in all ages of the church have found in it that which fed their spiritual life and lifted them on to the highest planes of fervor and devotion.

But this explanation of it reveals also its danger. As it is an attempt to use these creature forms as a vehicle for prayer and praise, it will be very apt to forget that, until the yoke of bondage is taken off the creature, its forms are a most unworthy instrument. All the vessels of ministry in the tabernacle needed the blood of sprinkling. (Heb ix: 21-23.) These patterns of things in the heavens need to be purified. If the creature, therefore, comes between us and the Creator, the worship degenerates into idolatry. Or if we forget that it is still under the shadow of the curse, our worship will be after "the way of Cain," who thought that he could approach God acceptably with the fruits of his own toil and the products of a creation still unredeemed.

Or still again, as these things impress strongly the natural man, who belongs to their system, there is great danger that he will seize the censer of our worship and, like Nadab and Abihu, offer his strange fire before the Lord. These things can be safely used only as the spiritual man preserves control, and keeps under strong restraint the impulses of the merely human nature. That which is offered merely in the energy of the flesh, or as a gratification to that in us which is merely natural, is not spiritual worship. Its eagerness is unhallowed

its earnestness a pretence. And, as in the case of Aaron's rash sons, who kindled their fire from human altars, there is spiritual death before the Lord.

While, therefore, we recognize a true hidden meaning in what is called Ritualistic Worship, while we admit that there is a deep felt want which it strives to meet, and a lofty sentiment which it seeks to express; and while we, therefore, have no sympathy with those who condemn it as simply spectacular display, we still recognize its dangers and the great caution which those should observe who employ it, both as to their own souls, that they may "serve God in the spirit," and avoid all that is merely a "fair shew in the flesh." And especially should they guard the promiscuous congregations who may join in it against the fatal self-deception that they are pleasing God in taking part in such services when they may perhaps be only pleasing themselves.

NOTES ON CURRENT OPINIONS AND EVENTS.

THE PRESENT ASPECT OF THE WORLD.—That the World is on the eve of great changes no intelligent observer will deny. There are clouds gathering all around the horizon. The first Christian nation of Europe is struggling with gigantic troubles at home and abroad. Irish and agrarian discontent, the mutterings of the laboring classes, secret enemies compelling the Queen to close the gates of Windsor Castle in dread of dynamite assassins, the struggles in Parliament are, of themselves, sufficient cause of apprehension. But added to these there is the unsuccessful campaign in Egypt, the immense task in the Soudan, the possible rising flame of fanaticism among the Moslems in India and Arabia, the threatening attitude of Russia along the Afghan frontier, the rivalry of

French and German schemes for colonization, the necessity for protecting British interests over a vast empire. These are the difficulties out of which England must now find some path of honor and of safety. The intestine troubles of France and of Germany are scarcely less, while France has no easy task in China. Beneath the crust of Russian absolutism are pent the hidden fires of anarchy and a godless nihilism.

But this is not the only point of view from which to take our survey. All these great nations, nominally Christian at least, are encroaching more and more upon the regions over which Paganism and Mohometanism have so long prevailed. England cannot now withdraw from Egypt. At the Congo Conference the Christian powers parcelled out the interior of Africa. Germany is annexing provinces on the African coast and elsewhere. France is marshalling her armies at the gates of the Celestial Empire. Meanwhile new conquests are all the time being made by man over the forces of nature. And so the world hastens on to the consummation.

What is that consummation? "The watchman saith, the morning cometh, and also the night." The coming morning is the day when the Lord shall be King over all the earth, and His name One; when all these warring interests of the nations shall be harmonized, and these hostile powers of nature be subdued, and all human affairs be centered in the One and only hand that is able to guide and control them all, the day of His appearing and kingdom.

But, "And also the night." Before this morning the night must deepen. The gathering clouds of this world's evil must discharge their fury in a final tempest before the sky is cleared for the morning without clouds, and for the rising of the full orbed Sun of Righteousness with healing in his wings.

THE OBSERVANCE OF LENT.—In one of our articles in this number we have spoken a word of reconciliation between conflicting theories of Christian worship. We have a similar word also concerning this ancient church usage of Lent.

All churches feel the need of special seasons of devotion, and for specially urging upon men the claims of the gospel. Weeks of Prayer, revival seasons, are efforts to supply this need. For some

reasons a stated season, properly chosen, and coming with the sanctions of authority and long approved usage, is better than efforts which are more desultory and spasmodic. During a twenty years pastorate in the Presbyterian church we adopted it as a stated rule of church life that a few weeks in the early spring should be given up to special services. The effect we believe was salutary.

The results of the one marked "revival" period through which we passed were such as not to weaken but to confirm our impression that the stated season was much the best method for the steady growth and healthy life of the church.

SIGNS OF UNITY.—The friendly "Study of the Episcopal Church" by Prof. Phelps, to which we referred in our first number, has been responded to in the *Independent* by Bishop Coxe in an equally friendly spirit.

The *Churchman* makes mention of the introduction of some prescript forms into the worship of a Presbyterian church in New York, of which Dr. M. R. Vincent is pastor, and also of the invitation given by the Rev. Dr. Fulton, a staunch churchman, to six ministers of different denominations to deliver addresses on "Christian evidences" in his Church during the Lenten weeks.

There exists in this country and England among Episcopalians a society, whose object it is to pray for the unity of the flock. Why should not such a society be formed in every denomination? Indeed ought not every church to be such a society? What prayer can any Christian congregation, by whatever name called, offer upon each occasion of its public worship, more acceptable to the Father of us all, and more dear to the heart of Jesus, the Saviour of us all, than prayer for the unity of the one church of the one Lord.

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

From the courteous letter of a subscriber in Chicago we make the following extract:

"I am sorry, after such a long period of such warm regard for you personally, to have to disagree with you upon three vital points. Suffer me to name them;

"I do not believe it possible for the Kingdom of God to exist in any form in such a scene as this is; the whole world lying in the wicked one; and the Devil the god of this world; and using all of its governmental and other machinery to subserve his own purposes!

"Secondly, I do not agree with your optimistic views, nor do I see how one that holds to such a theory can have proper views of what sin is, and of what its effects are upon man and the whole creation. The pessimistic view may be drawn as black as you can make it, but instead of producing gloom and despair, it ought to make the sinner more jubilant to know that out of such a horrible state of things God's grace comes to him, and he may have salvation as a gift.

"Then, thirdly, as to the "endless punishment," I accept the simple language of the Scripture, that as the "life" of the saved sinner is to be eternal, so the "punishment" of the unsaved sinner is to be eternal; and I think I see a necessity in the moral government of God that it should be so. The race is to multiply forever, and the lost under the first Adam's headship will be looked upon through all the coming generations of the race. In the restituted condition of things, and with such a demonstration of what "sin" is and the "punishment" it has necessitated, there never can be another rebellion in all the eternal round of ages."

To this we make the following reply:

DEAR BROTHER:—Yours of the 27th received. I am grateful for its expressions of former personal regard and confidence. I am glad also, that, notwithstanding your dissent from my views on important points, you are willing to continue to receive "Words of Reconciliation," and so to give me a longer and more patient hearing. I beg that you will not hastily decide against these views, nor until I have had opportunity to unfold from the Scriptures my reasons for urging them upon the attention of the Church. I can only reply briefly to your three points of criticism.

1. I agree with you in holding that the "Kingdom of God," in the technical sense in which that phrase is frequently used in Scripture as denoting the future manifested reign of Christ with His saints, does not now exist here. But surely no one can deny that, although administered from "behind the clouds," God's kingdom ruleth over all. (Ps. ciii. 19; Daniel iv. 34-35.) Nor can any one deny that unto our exalted Lord has *now* been given

"all power in heaven and in earth." And therefore while it is true that the Devil is still the "god of this world," and that the "whole world lieth in the wicked one," it is not true that his rule is administered apart from and outside of the universal government of God.

And hence the judgment of this world and the casting out of its prince has been going on ever since Jesus was "lifted up." (Note the force of the word *now*. Jno. xii. 31-32.)

I agree with you, however, that this judgment has its culminating crisis, and this kingdom its *manifest* triumph at "His appearing."

2. As to your second objection I can only say that I could not construct a theodicy from its point of view. I believe it draws a much darker veil over the face of God than the Scriptures draw, and notwithstanding your view that the more horrible the state of things the more is God's grace magnified in man's salvation, it still largely conceals from men the full knowledge of that grace.

That knowledge is spiritual life to men, the want of it is spiritual death. Hence we should by all means guard against obscuring it.

3. As to your point about "endless punishment," I think we can never properly understand this subject, until we learn to take the word "eternal" out of the time-conditions in which we commonly use it. You say the life of the saved is "to be" eternal. Scripture affirms that their life *now* is eternal. They are already raised with Christ into the region of that life. So also it teaches that the sinner is *now* under the abiding wrath of God, and that this wrath is *now* revealed from heaven. (Rom. i. 18) This wrath against sin is God's unchanging attribute. It remains the same in this world and in all worlds. And it eternally cuts off the sinner, who abides such, from His presence. Some may remain sinners forever. Certainly some go down into the "second death." But before that death of death (Rev. xiv. 14,) all men, saints and sinners, are, each in their own order, to have a resurrection from the dead. I am assured from a close and prayerful study of the Old and New Testaments that this resurrection,

while it by no means brings to the sinner "eternal life," and while it perpetuates in his body his "condemnation," is not wholly nor mainly for purposes of retribution.

It is a redemptive act. It comes in virtue of the blessed fact that the second man has bought back for the race the life in manhood which the first man forfeited. It must bring with it, therefore, some possibilities of blessing. Men may now so harden themselves against the grace of God that they will remain hardened during that age to come. Our Lord warns us that there is a sin for which there is no forgiveness, either in this world or in the world to come, and that such are "guilty of an eternal sin." (Mark iii. 28-29. R. V.)

But while we hold to all this, we have no right to deny that the recovery of all men out of death, the wages of sin, through resurrection, is a *redeeming* act of God. It must therefore prepare the way for the unfolding of new wonders of His grace.

We wish we could hold all our brethren who differ from us close to this point. For here the whole issue lies. "*Is the promised resurrection of all mankind in the line of God's economy of redemption, or is it not?*"

NOTE ON MATTHEW XXV. 31-46.—With respect to the passage upon which our correspondent bases his third objection, and which, on its surface, is the strong bulwark of his view of endless punishment, we expect, in future numbers of this magazine, to show that the prevalent misconception of its teaching has arisen from the failure to perceive,

1. That it occurs only in the "Gospel to the Hebrews," and is therefore to be interpreted as belonging to that special phase of our Lord's teaching, in which He made himself known to the *Jews* as the promised Messiah and Head of an everlasting and universal kingdom.

2. That its description of His future reign and judgment is based upon the vision of Daniel (Ch. vii.), and it therefore relates to a reign over the earth and the nations of mankind.

It is therefore a *pre*-resurrection and not a *post* resurrection scene. Here lies the radical mistake in the prevalent view of it. Not a word about resurrection occurs in these closing discourses of Jesus concerning "the end of the age." Before Him shall be gathered *all the nations.* (πάντα τὰ ἔθνη.) It is not denied that all the dead generations of mankind shall, in their own time and order, be gathered before Him. Nor is it denied that there shall be a special judgment of "the nations" in the closing scenes of this dispensation. But this should not close our eyes to the fact, which Jesus most carefully impressed upon His hearers, that this judgment of the nations was to begin before the passing away of that generation. (Matt. xxiv. 29-34.)

4. There has been a failure to study the Old Testament use of the term, "unquenchable fire." This is especially necessary in the interpretation of a passage whose roots lie so deeply in Old Testament conceptions.

5. There has been blindness to what we may call the *cosmical* features of our Lord's judging and redeeming work. The New Testament teaches that He is now enthroned above all the powers and forces that rule in this created system. These are the "angels" of Scripture. They *now* execute His judgments. They shall be the *manifest* attendants of His glorious epiphany. But they are now continually handing over men and nations to the eternal fire of God's anger against sin. We expect to show that our Lord's words here are a surprising anticipation of the disclosures of modern science concerning an eternal fire, a devouring cosmical energy that lies behind all existing creature forms, and which must consume all that have not in them the triumphant energy of an eternal life.

6. The punishment here contemplated precedes resurrection. It means much more, however, than bodily death. (Matt. x. 28; Luke xvi. 19-31.) But it does not contradict all previous Old Testament anticipations of the "hope toward God that there shall be a resurrection both of the just and of the unjust," nor does it remove this promise from the region of "hope" to that, for a large proportion of the human race, of the midnight of despair.